



M E D I A R E L E A S E

STATE OF TENNESSEE
BUREAU OF TENNCARE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: MARILYN ELAM
615.532.8675 (OFFICE)
615.969.2619 (CELL)

STATE TO CLOSE ENROLLMENT IN OPTIONAL TENNCARE ELIGIBILITY CATEGORIES AT END OF DAY TODAY

PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED PLANS TO CLOSE ENROLLMENT FOR CERTAIN ELIGIBILITY
GROUPS WILL PROCEED AS PLANNED

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – As part of previously announced TennCare changes, the TennCare Bureau and Department of Human Services (DHS) will no longer process applications filed after the close of business today for enrollment into some of the TennCare eligibility categories, state officials announced today.

“Closing enrollment in these categories of eligibility is one of the early steps that must be taken to move forward with the State’s plan to reform the TennCare program,” said TennCare Director J.D. Hickey. “The federal government has granted the State the authority it needs to close enrollment as part of our efforts to rein in the runaway costs of this program.”

The request to close enrollment was made in the State’s February waiver submission to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and was provided to the TennCare Oversight Committee and the Tennessee Justice Center in January. Authority to close enrollment was granted by federal officials on March 24, 2005. Director Hickey also publicly discussed closing enrollment with legislators during this week’s TennCare Oversight Committee hearing.

Medically Needy

Enrollment will be closed to non-pregnant adults who are 21 and over for the Medically Needy category of TennCare Medicaid. Most of these people have income higher than the limit to qualify for Medicaid, but use medical bills to “spend down” their income to qualify.

Closing enrollment in the Medically Needy category will not affect people who are already enrolled in that group, except that once their current period of eligibility ends, they will not be able to qualify in this category again. To keep Medicaid after their current period of eligibility ends, current enrollees will need to qualify in a different category.

The Medically Needy category remains open for pregnant women and children.

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729 Church Street
Nashville, TN 37247

TennCare Standard

In addition, new applications will no longer be processed for enrollment into TennCare Standard (waiver) eligibility categories, which include individuals who are classified as uninsurable.

The only group that may be able to enroll in TennCare Standard is children under age 19 who qualify as “Medicaid Rollovers.” To qualify as a Medicaid Rollover, a child must be:

- Under age 19;
- AND, have TennCare Medicaid that will end soon;
- AND, qualify for TennCare Standard based on the State’s eligibility criteria and process.

“The Department of Human Services offices will continue to accept and process applications for enrollment in open TennCare eligibility categories,” said Human Services Commissioner Gina Lodge. “Our counselors in the county offices and the telephone-based Family Assistance Service Centers are prepared to assist enrollees and applicants with questions they may have.”

Applications filed prior to 4:30 p.m. on April 29, 2005 will be processed for eligibility in all categories of TennCare Medicaid and TennCare Standard that were open at the time the application was filed, including non-pregnant adult Medically Needy.

A person who files an application after 4:30 p.m. on April 29, 2005, will not be eligible in any category of TennCare Medicaid or TennCare Standard that is closing.

TennCare is Tennessee’s managed care insurance program for 1.3 million who are poor, disabled or uninsured.

For more information on TennCare Medicaid and TennCare Standard eligibility categories, visit: <http://www.tennessee.gov/tenncare/eligible.html>

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